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Live

Sled Island 2009 Recap

Various venues

Calgary, AB

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Trevor Morelli (CHARTattack)

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CHARTattack's Trevor Morelli checked out Calgary's Sled Island Music Festival from June 24-28. Here's his report:

Final Fantasy's Owen Pallett may be a man of few words, but it was the fans at Calgary's third annual Sled Island Music Festival that were left speechless after his show.

With handmade "Sold Out" signs plastered all over the doors, the Central United Church once again provided the perfect atmosphere needed to kick off such an ambitious and diverse festival. I strolled into the church shortly after **Slim Twig** hit the stage, and ironically, the singer himself was not unlike a crazed street preacher.

Although I had no idea what he was saying, our curly-haired hero pranced around and howled at the top of his lungs over a wall of reverb and pure noise. Judging by the crowd's reaction, I'd argue most people were just as weirded out as I was, but it was entertaining if nothing else.

Shortly after setting up his own gear, Pallett got back on stage to tune his various instruments. Quiet fell upon the audience, only to turn into laughter moments later.

"That wasn't a song," he chuckled with the crowd. "If you don't like the show, at least you can't accuse me of being lazy."

Over the next hour, Pallett amazed Calgary with both his sense of harmony and his unreal technical wizardry. Pallett kicked off the set with "The Sea" from 2005's *Has A Good Home*, and easily entranced the crowd with his loops, overlays and symphonic soundscapes.

Pallett's never one to shy away from experimentation, and mixed cuts from his 2006 [Polaris Music Prize-winning *He Poos Clouds*](#) with newer tracks like "Keep The Dog Quiet" and "Midnight Directives."

If there was one disappointing thing about this gig, it was that we didn't get to hear any infamous Final Fantasy covers, like his takes on Bloc Party's "This Modern Love" or Mariah Carey's "Fantasy." Guess I'll have to stick to YouTube for those tidbits.

Things got a little more sketchy on Friday night. Downtown Calgary's Olympic Plaza is normally a hangout for drifters and other nomadic types, but was transformed into a Bonnaroo-style outdoor festival for a night. Plenty of cops patrolled the area, making the site more "safe" but ultimately sketchier for fun-seekers.

Warm summer air greeted **Holy Fuck**, who were more than happy to shoot back some of their own audio cocaine into the audience. I don't

think I've ever seen a lyric-less band come across as this intense.

One memorable track was [LP](#)'s "Royal Gregory", which easily ripped through the ear canals and got people bobbing their heads to its infectious, hammering beat.

By the end of their 45-minute set, Holy Fuck had the crowd wrapped around their pinky finger. Closer "Lovely Allen" provided enough catchy hooks, pop beats and knob-twiddling to earn a roaring applause upon its conclusion.

Apparently, this was the point in the show where the sound guy took a smoke break. **Liars** were next, but the P.A. music kept vamping well into their show.

After the third tune, it was obvious the music wasn't stopping and I didn't have the patience to unscramble the band's already complicated songs. Getting hit in the shoulder by a frisbee soon after was a sign that the rock gods were telling me I was wrong.

The Breeders looked like war horses emerging from battle, and they executed a set full of fuzzy, grungy '90s nostalgia. Sweatpants were the wardrobe of choice for singer Kim Deal, who seamlessly lead the band through catchy tunes like "No Aloha" and "Huffer."

"It's beautiful here in Calgary," Deal said, breaking the ice.

"Our gear didn't arrive here," she continued, meant as a lighthearted comment rather than an excuse.

Deal didn't let the setback ruin the moment in the slightest. With enough rented Marshall stacks to power a jet engine, the Boston/Dayton, Ohio band continued to entertain the Sledders, tossing in more well-known songs like "Bang On" and "Metal Man."

"Cannonball" showed up around the halfway mark and instantly earned an earthquake of cheers and whistles. Heads bobbed along as Deal screamed, "Want you/Coocoo/Cannonball!" into the microphone during the chorus.

"We're classy. We know a Beatles song," joked Deal before launching into a powerful version of "Happiness Is A Warm Gun" near the end of the hour-long set.

As the sun went down on another great year for Sled Island, The Breeders reminded everyone exactly what Sled Island is all about: exposing yourself to original artists who are more interested in advancing music than fattening their pocketbooks.

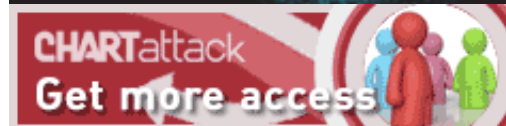
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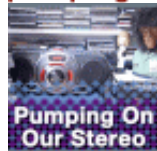


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